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ABSTRACT

Pressures for innovation in administration and instruction at the elementary level in Italy's public education system during the 1960s led to two major pieces of legislation mandating five basic changes. These changes involved providing cultural enrichment programs, reassessing the relationship between teaching and learning, decreasing the social gap between teachers and students, expanding school attendance time from 25 to 35 hours per week, and involving parents, students, and the community in school management. An experiment in full-time elementary education conducted in a school in Adro, in northern Italy, involved several of these changes. Team teaching; nongraded, heterogeneous instructional grouping: teacher involvement in management: the use of outside consultants: increased use of audiovisual aids: and parent involvement are key elements in the new program. Several aspects of the implementation of this experiment are described briefly in this report, including funding, evaluation, factors supporting and hindering the change, and problems existing after implementation. Positive and negative factors affecting a similar project in another Italian city are provided for comparison. (Author/PGD)

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Management Analysis Paper

Experiment in Full Time Public Education in Italy

This document was prepared by the Italian team attending the IMTEC training course on The Management of Change: Elementary Education, to be held at the Ullensvang Hotel in Lofthus, Norway, from 5th - 16th May, 1974.

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and, as such, do not necessarily reflect the position of the OECD, or the national authorities concerned.

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Management Analysis Paper

Experiment in Full Time Public Education - Italy

Background Information

The structure and functioning of Italian elementary schools are guided by the national school act of 1955. The specific characterists of these schools are as follows:

- children from 6 to 11 years of age attend elementary school. There are two elementary sections, grades one and two, and grades three, four and five. At the end of the first period all pupils undergo examinations.

- the curriculum includes religion, moral and civic education, physical education, history, geography, science, math, Italian, drawing and writing, singing and handicraft.

- a single teacher is responsible for the management of a class of approximately 25 pupils. Specialists are offered for singing, music and religious instruction, but they are not universally available.

- the teacher is under the immediate direction and control of the Headmaster who has complete responsibility for the pedagogy and administration of the school. One or more schools become part of a larger administrative arrangement, titled Circulo Didattico, which becomes part of a larger administrative unit, comparable to the "Local Education Authorities" (LEAs) in England, called Ispettorato Scolastico.

Pressure for Innovation

Strong pressures for innovation in the administration and pedagogy of the elementary school developed during the decade of the sixties. Eminent teachers at the university level or working in government offices lobbied to more widely introduce progressive ideas in the sociology and psychology of education as well as comparative education. Other influential groups concerned about educational change were teachers' unions and associations, political parties, and teachers in experimental schools of one kind or another.

Five specific demands for change can be isolated from the general discussion and debate:

1) - schools must provide social and cultural protection for students in general and especially for the children of the laboring class. Cultural environment opportunities should be offered to disadvantaged populations.

2) - further study must be given to relate teaching to learning. Traditional subjects should be integrated with new kinds of cultural experiences.

3) - the social horizons of both teachers and pupils should

be expanded. Group activities should be introduced and the social and psychological gap between the teacher and student should be lessened. The traditional teacher must be given training and support in bringing new subject matter to the students via new approaches, i.e. audio-visual aids, drama, consultants.

4) - mandatory attendance at school should be expanded from 25 hours per week (generally from 8:30-12:40 in the morning) to a more appropriate amount of time, perhaps 35 hours. The afternoon activities must be integrated with those conducted in the morning in order to create an organic whole.

5) - democratic participation of parents, students, and other community resources should be expanded in the management of schools.

Full-time Public Education: The Legal Background

Laws have been passed which provide the framework for innovations in all five areas. These are codified in the following documents:

- Law N 820. Article 1. This law mandates that the length of the elementary school day will be extended and that the Headmaster may hire one teacher for every 25 pupils in order to integrate morning activities with those in the afternoon and to introduce new and specialized subject matter. This is the basic law behind the innovation described in this Management Analysis Paper, "Full time Public Education".

- Circular 7 of March 1972 contains more precise regulations and guidance for designing full time schools. There are two general sections to circular 7:

a. Procedural Requirements:

In order to get funds and material supports to expand and diversify the staff of the schools and bring more of the community into decision-making about the school, a group supporting the experiment, whether teachers, a Headmaster or others, has to write a thorough proposal which must be examined and approved by the school Inspector, the Provincial School Authority and finally by the Central Authority before the project can commence. Significantly, project approval and funding is only for one year.

b. General Considerations:

Education is perceived as an organic process which can be affected through a multitude of interventions. There is no one correct format or design for change. Methodical planning, however, including as many community parties as possible, is the fundamental approach to problem solving. A few of the essential questions to be considered are: (a) Are the appropriate buildings

available; (b) Is space sufficient; (c) Are the teachers enthusiastic; (d) Is the project supported by civic administrators, parents and others of the community?

A Full Time School Experiment in Adro, Brescia, Italy

The Characteristics of the Innovation

A Full-time school experiment has been going on in this school for almost two years. The Headmaster, Mr. Damiano, will be at the IMTEC May course to answer questions about the experiment.

Instruction: Students are taught in groups of 2 to a maximum of 50. Groups are heterogeneous including children of different ages (frequently a disparity of two years), social development and personality.

Students, in cooperation with teachers, can choose different kinds of activities for 4-8 hours per week. These activities may include teachers, pupils and others whom the students desire, and generally students are able to perform these optional activities where they choose. Whenever possible, teachers work on a team of 3-5 teachers. No single teacher is responsible for a class.

Teachers: There used to be 20 teachers for 460 pupils. Now there are 32, which is appropriate due to the expansion of school hours from 25 to 40 hours.

Specialization: Each teacher has chosen to teach different subjects according to the conditions of the project. Specialization has been curtailed; no teacher is responsible solely for one subject.

Cooperation: Meetings of teachers are regularly scheduled in order to revise the teaching schedule, to evaluate the progress of individual students and to generally share experiences.

Consultants are available to provide a theoretical framework in which to evaluate practical approaches. They often work in the classrooms with teachers and discuss methods and educational issues prior to or after class.

Governance: Teachers regularly meet to discuss the progress of the experiment and they have full opportunity to influence the experimental design through the managers of the program.

Content Change: No qualitative distinction or cultural significance, is to be made between activities required by the curriculum and other creative activities. The hours of instruction varies in the two areas. New activities are to be introduced into the school besides the scheduled ones, for example: ionic language and social sciences. Significant changes are to be made in the

instruction of traditional subjects, for example. Italian and Math.

Stress will be placed on helping students to heighten their ability and enthusiasm to acquire knowledge rather than emphasizing the importance of established knowledge.

Audio visual aids will be more widely used.

Parents have an increased degree of influence over the goals and values of the school and how the school is to function.

Project Strategy

1) Elaborate a new curriculum. Approach teachers with team teaching concept. Involve parents in logistical services.

2) Evaluate the curriculum. Expand team teaching concept and importance of new subject matter, perhaps inter-disciplinary in nature. Involve parents in teaching subjects.

3) Re-evaluate functioning of experiment and ensure that all appropriate parties are fully involved and have the resources to accomplish established goals.

Managerial Context

Local level. When law 820 was passed and circulated, the Mayor of Adro contacted the Headmaster and said that he was interested in the innovation and that he was prepared to support it financially.

The Headmaster was already considering the possibilities of a full time experiment and in fact had already presented some general thoughts on this matter for the consideration of the teachers. He was careful to fully engage teachers in thinking about an experiment rather than directing them to respond to his ideas. At this time it was thought unlikely that the project would be approved by the Italian Ministry of Instruction.

To everyone's great surprise, the Ministry approved the project during the summer. Immediately teachers were informed and a parent meeting was organized to create a community committee to support the experiment. School administrators began to design alternative plans for change.

Management of the Innovation

A series of meetings with officials of the Ministry of Education took place in order to choose the 12 teachers who would join the 20 who were already part of the staff. The new teachers were selected in the province by the Headmaster largely on the basis of whether or not they were open to change rather than whether or not they were highly competent in teaching subject matter. In September teachers visited the School Center in Trento in order to observe the full time school there and to examine documents relating to that experiment.

For the major part of the first year, the management of change was the responsibility of the Headmaster and several key teachers. Slowly decision-making authority has been extended to the general population of teachers.

Budget

The State gave $3,000 to subsidize Consultants and to purchase consumable materials. A second state grant of $800 was made for teacher training seminars.

The Regional government provided a grant of $7,000 for school meals and the transport of low-income pupils. This grant arrived at the end of the school year and thus it was impossible to distribute it without inequity. The Committee of Parents, the Local Committee for Pupils' Assistance and the Headmaster thus decided to spend 3/4 of this money for kitchen equipment and the remainder was used to purchase furnishings for two laboratory rooms for special activities.

The Mayor made a grant of $1,500 which was spent on the salaries of educational aides and for other technical and consultant personnel not on the staff.

Evaluation of Change

Evaluation in the first year was limited to informal discussions held at monthly meetings with teachers and the parents of students. It is a positive indication that nearly all teachers have decided to continue with the experiment into the second year.

Factors Supporting the Change

- the support of the Mayor and town administration;
- the existing building which had a lunchroom which could accommodate 220 people, a kitchen, a laboratory for group activities, and a large court yard for recreation and other uses;
- some parents actively supported the project and were working to gain the commitment of others;
- in former years, teachers expressed a desire for educational reform;
- the enthusiasm, integrity and ability of the teachers selected for the experiment;
- the teachers' and Mayor's confidence in the management capabilities of the Headmaster.

Building on the Base of Support

- Seminars were conducted for teachers on non-graded schools, group dynamics, team teaching, client centered therapy, creativity, etc.
- Meetings were held with local officials of the community to explain that the innovation would not be too expensive, that it would reflect the progressive and healthy spirit of the community and that it would reflect posi-

tively on the managers who managed it.

- During the meetings with the parents, the educational benefits of a longer stay at school were emphasized, especially for those parents who worked full time and were unable to meet their children when they came home. It was also emphasized that the experiment would allow parents a greater opportunity to change the school to meet their children's needs.

Negative Factors

- The parish priest was a critical ally at the start of the innovation in rallying and consolidating popular support for change. Unfortunately, later on, when sexual education was introduced, this collaboration became less enthusiastic.
- Only a small number of parents were actively involved in the experiment. Others showed open concern about the large number of changes, particularly in traditional subjects such as grammar and math.
- The program for assisting pupils with socio-economic handicaps was organized by a committee that was dominated by a very active retired teacher who carried on this activity with excessive zeal and very personal methods. When the school administration tried to alter the direction the committee was taking, a series of personal clashes burst out which polarized teachers and had influence on the broader community.
- None of the teachers had experience with the changes brought about in Adro. There are widely varying degrees of involvement and communications from and with teachers continues to be a problem.

Present Problems

- It is difficult to evaluate the quality of new subjects taught such as music, cinema, theater;
- Training activities are required to minimize the consequences of conflicting ideolcgies held by teachers;
- Staff should be expanded by 3 teachers. Teachers should be teamed with one another more frequently.
- Parents must be more fully engaged in resolving educational problems
- More funds are needed for free school lunches, as well as a free foreign language program, perhaps English. Both programs should be available for the total student population.

Concluding Remarks

More detail will be presented at the IMTEC May course. The problems in the full time school innovation briefly outlined above in the Adro case have appeared in a slightly different mix in another full time school experiment which was the subject of another "Management Analysis Paper". The barriers and facilitating factors in the second case, the full time school in Rho

(Milano), are briefly outlined below as a comparison with the Adro case.

Positive	Negative
1. Teachers are convinced the the plan will work and are highly motivated.	1. Buildings are inadequate.
2. Parents are eager to learn about the project and to help with it.	2. Bureaucratic centralizing of public instruction in Italy hinders the speedy development of the experiments.
3. The Headmaster is able to coordinate the project and people cooperate with him.	3. Inadequate funds.
4. The central government supports the experiment with laws and modest finance.	4. Teacher turnover creates a serious problem of training new inexperienced teachers.
5. The regional government is more positive than the central and is providing aids for in-service training of teachers.	5. There are no public or private research groups who could carry out evaluative studies.
6. Trade unions and teacher unions support the innovations and want them spread to more schools.	6. Some administrative regularities (class registers, reports, marks, etc.) have not been abolished by the Ministry.
7. Pedagogical experts and researchers are favorable and give many theoretical contributions.	7. The secondary school program remains inconsistent with the elementary innovations.
8. Political parties and professional organizations support the changes generally.	8. The innovations are criticized as being "too easy" on pupils because of the emphasis on play.
	9. The local town administration opposes the innovation and doesn't explain why.
	10. The staff is not adequately paid.

These and other factors will be the subject of in-depth analyses in the IMTEC course. It is significant that Full-time schools are bringing about some fundamental reforms of the entire system of education in Italy.